

Jedediah Barber House
18 North Main Street
Homer
Cortland County
New York

HABS No. NY-5597

HABS

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

NY- HABS No. 5597

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JEDEDIAH BARBER HOUSE

Location: 18 North Main Street, Homer, Cortland County, New York.

Present Owner: Robert E. Nichols and Jane M. Nichols, his wife.

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Nichols.

Present Use: Residence.

Brief Statement
of Significance:

An early Federal period brick home remodeled in the Greek Revival style. It is of particular interest to county residents because it was built by a local pioneer merchant and banker influential in the early development of Homer Village and Cortland County.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Original construction 1825-1826, remodeled extensively c. 1850.
2. Architect: Unknown. Many details from books by Asher Benjamin.
3. Original and subsequent owners:
 - 1824 - Jedediah Barber acquired land from William Smith, January 12, 1824, recorded in the Cortland County Book of Deeds, Book K, pages 179-181.
 - 1879 - Sold at public auction after death of Jedediah Barber (1876) to George Murray, on May 10, 1879. (See Howe, Jedediah Barber, 1787-1876, page 188.)
 - 1880 - Coleman Hitchcock purchased property from estate of Jane M. Charlick, Sept. 15, 1880, recorded in the Cortland County Book of Deeds, Book 65, page 435.
 - 1930 - Central New York Bible Conference acquired property April 1, 1930, recorded in the Cortland County Book of Deeds, Book 162, page 166.
 - 1968 - Robert E. Nichols and Jane M. Nichols, his wife, acquired property July 16, 1968. Book of Deeds, Book 312, page 374.

4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: Unknown. Purportedly constructed by imported workmen. (See Howe, Jedediah Barber, 1787-1876, pages 136-141.)
5. Original plans, construction, etc.:
Renovations done by Mr. and Mrs. Nichols revealed much of the earlier construction. Apparently, the first construction consisted of a Federal style house, five-bays wide, one room deep plus a lower two-story brick rear ell extending back to the rear wall of the present house. The ridge of the roof of the ell was perpendicular to the main hipped roof. The window above the front door originally had an arch and sidelights. The woodwork in all the rooms is original except the northeast first floor library where a black marble mantel with Ionic marble columns has replaced the earlier Federal style mantel. Evidence of the original construction includes a brick bearing wall that runs the length of the present house north to south forming the rear wall of the front rooms and hall. About 1850, the house was remodeled to the Greek Revival style. A new hip roof was built over both of the original roofs and over the south west space between the house and ell that became the new three story tetrastyle Ionic portico. In order to provide space for the monitor windows, and a new third floor on the ell, the new roof had to be higher than either previous roof. In the present attic, the new higher plate for the roof and the line of the older roof on the brick chimneys can be seen. This change made the former attic of the ell a full floor in height with an attic above it. Probably at the time of these changes, a new frame ell was built at the rear of the house for a kitchen and woodshed. At least two frame ells have been attached to the back of the house. Many of the features of the house can be traced to architectural pattern books, such as those by Asher Benjamin.
6. Alterations and additions:
Numerous changes were made during the Barber era, especially during the remodeling of about 1850. Few changes have been made since, except for the installation of central heating, plumbing, and electricity. Renovation between 1968 and 1973 included removal of a rear frame ell, the second floor balcony of the side portico, the installation of a kitchen in the rear northwest room and minor changes in the partitions on the rear second and third floors to accommodate new bathrooms and closets.

B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure: Jedediah Barber was a pioneer merchant banker who established the "Great Western" store on Homer's Main Street in 1811. This venture grew into a very extensive and lucrative business, enabling him to exert a considerable influence on the physical and cultural development of the community. Governor Clinton was a long time friend and frequent visitor of Barber's and he had Clinton Street along which lay 100 acres of his land named for him. Samuel Woodworth, President of Oberlin College, was also a friend of Barber, as was Andrew D. White, President of Cornell University, whose father had been in Mr. Barber's employ. Commodore Vanderbilt, President of the New York Central Railroad, was a friend who visited Mr. Barber in Homer.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

Howe, Herbert Barber. Jedediah Barber, 1787-1876; a Footnote to the History of the Military Tract of Central New York. Morningside Heights, New York, Columbia University Press, c 1939. Reprinted in 1966 by AMS Press, Inc. New York, N.Y. 10003. Some of the dates for the house cannot be substantiated by recent findings.

_____, Paris Lived in Homer. Cortland, N.Y., Cortland County Historical Society, 1968.

Cortland Democrat. August, 1881.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: An example of the remodeling and rebuilding during the nineteenth century of a Federal house into a large and elegant home.
2. Condition of fabric: Good. Exterior brick sandblasted in 1969. Reinforcing steel posts and beams inserted to support second floor and sagging front wall over front door, which was repaired and partially rebuilt.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Forty-seven feet (five bays) by 54' including tetrastyle side portico, 30' x 12' on southwest corner. Two stories in front section, three in rear.

2. Foundations: Flat field stone below grade, cut stone facing above grade. Cellar excation under about 80% of the building. Height of basement from the floor to ceiling is 8'4".
3. Wall construction: Light red brick walls, approximately 2' thick, in common bond, with cut stone lintels and sills.
4. Structural system: Brick bearing walls with post and beam system now reinforced with steel posts, 3" x 8" joists, about 16" in center.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Entrance stoop has flagstone finish slab, two Ionic columns supporting flat roofed entrance portico with full entablature. South portico 30' x 12', flagstone floor, has four large fluted Greek Ionic columns 23' high. North entrance has stone stoop. All entrance have cut stone steps.
6. Chimneys: Two front room fireplace chimneys flush with exterior wall. Each one serves the fireplace on both the first and second floor. They extend about 10' above the roof. Rear central chimney about 11' in from rear west wall.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: The main entrance on east (front) of building has 3'6" x 8', eight-panel door, with glass transom and sidelights. The door from the portico is 3'8" x 7'3" and has a pair of three-panel doors. The north entry is 3'5" x 7'2" and has six panels in the doors.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The windows are one over one or six over six in the two story front section. The back section was 12 over 8 or 12 over 12, although many but not all have been changed to 2 over 2. All of the front windows have $\frac{1}{4}$ " plate glass.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Low hipped roof, now covered with asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice and eaves: Wood cornice with six monitor windows with cast iron ornamental grills on north and west elevations, total entablature about 6' high. Contains 18 ornamental gratings of cast iron, including the six covering the monitor windows.

C. Detailed Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Central hall plan with one room to each side of hall. Circular staircase rises against circular wall in 27' high center hall of house. Behind stairwall is dining room with portico to south and new kitchen in room to north. Second floor contains front stairhall and two front bedrooms with fireplaces. Back section is five steps lower and contains two baths, one bedroom and rear room in back stairhall. Third floor over back half of house contains four rooms and bathroom and stairs to attic. Attic room in center of hip with skylight to roof.
2. Flooring: Original floor of red pine boards is now completely covered with carpet, except for third floor which has random width pine in natural finish.
3. Wall and ceiling finish: Heavy plaster on wood lathe. All rooms are wallpapered.
4. Doorways and doors: Six-pane recessed panel doors. Door from front hall to dining room curved and opens into curved recess in wall.
5. Decorative features and trim: Doors and windows have trim about 7" wide and $2\frac{1}{2}$ " deep molding. Downstairs northeast library has black marble fireplace, other fireplaces in living room and bedrooms have wooden mantels with Federal style carved details. Cornices are of plaster in library and hallway and in wood in front bedrooms and living room.
6. Hardware: Various periods, with many of the original locksets still in place with new door knobs added.
7. Lighting, type of fixtures: Federal style fixtures have been used throughout. Central hall has $6\frac{1}{2}$ ' brass and crystal chandelier. Living room and dining room have Williamsburg style brass chandeliers.
8. Heating: Central, steam heat, gas fired.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: Present lot is approximately 130' wide by 313' deep. House fronts on Main Street and sets back about 86' from Main Street and 38' from the side street, Elm Avenue. The house faces due east.

2. Outbuildings: New four-car garage, 40' x 28', with matching cornice and hipped roof of same pitch.
3. Landscaping and walks: Nothing remains of the formal gardens. The lawn is shaded by large maples and evergreens. Walks to the front entrances are cement. Ten cut granite post support a chain fence and hitching post along Main Street.

Prepared by R. Curtis Harris
Cortland County
Historical Society
May, 1965
and
Robert E. Nichols
December, 1974

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation of structures in the Southern Tier of New York State, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Cortland County Historical Society and Valley Development Foundation, Inc.

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The historical material was prepared by R. Curtis Harris in May 1965 and Robert E. Nichols in December 1974. Photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher in April 1966. The project was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Constance Werner Ramirez, April 1976.